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### Letters to the Church during COVID-19: 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2020

To all the brothers and sisters at KBC,

One of the tasks that disciples of Jesus have had throughout church history is to look at the Scriptures and apply them to our lives and context. Over the next few weeks, I wanted to share some passages of Scripture that offer great encouragement for us in this season that we are in at the moment. Perhaps the opening question is, 'How do I live out KBC's mission statement, that we are a fellowship of Christians committed to being and making disciples of Jesus Christ' at a time such as this?

Here's our first passage - Jeremiah 29:1-14. Grab your Bible, read the passage and make sure you read it slowly. No cutting corners, I know we all know Jeremiah 29:11 but you need the full story. All done?

OK - the people of Israel had been conquered as the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Habakkuk had foretold. God's people now find themselves in exile in Babylon and they are wishing like crazy, and the false prophets are encouraging them in this, that the effects of the invasion will quickly be undone, and they can go back to Jerusalem. So, Jeremiah, a true prophet, writes to them and gives them some bad news but with great encouragement. The bad news is, they will be there for seventy years. The good news is, God is with them and for them. He has a plan and future for them. Their situation may be the end of their tawdry dreams, but it is not the end of hope, and with God they have a real future. With Him in their future there will be willing and joyful communion and they will find this in the everyday stuff of life.

So, what does this passage have to say to us today in lockdown? Well first the bad news, and please understand this is conjecture and not a Word from the Lord (I am definitely no Old Testament prophet). I think this disruption to life is going to last a while. We have another 3 weeks of lockdown with the likelihood of more. However even when the lockdown is lifted, it will be a phased return to allowing larger gatherings. So when might we start meeting again? Don't hold me to this but possibly only August/September.

You are probably thinking, 'give me the good news!' Well here it is straight from Jeremiah's letter to the exiles.

1. Settle down (vs.5): what I have in mind here is, settle down and accept that this is what life looks like at the moment. Sometimes we spend so much time, wishing things were different that we miss what God may be doing. So, settle down: be still, get into a

rhythm of life where the Father has pride of place. For the Israelites this was planting, building, marrying etc. What will settling down look like for you?

2. Pray to the Lord (vs.7): the exiles were told to seek the peace and prosperity of the city and so should we, as we pray to the Lord: for Basildon, for our church, for the NHS, for the nation, for the furthering of His kingdom, for ...the list goes on. Pray.
3. Promise (vs.10): God promised the Israelites He would bring them back to Jerusalem and God is going to bring this season to an end in His time. It is a firm promise. Only, when the Israelites did go back, it was very different. Again, I am no prophet, but when we emerge from this season, be ready for it because I think things are going to be very different. Work will be different, home life may be different and church will be different.
4. Plans (vs.11): God had a plan for His people, and He has a plan for us. He is at work in this season bringing about good for those who love Him according to His purposes (Romans 8:28). The question for us is: Will we recognise the new things that God is doing among us and will we be willing to follow Him in what He is doing?
5. I will be found by you (vs.14): this is such an amazing promise, but it is conditional. God will be found by us and we will know His presence! Amazing! But there is a condition in the previous verse, 'You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart'. It lays the challenge before us; Will this season be a season where we seek the Lord with all our heart?

That my friends is good news, no...great news! Through His Word, which is useful for teaching us and encouraging us, I believe God is saying, 'settle down and be still, pray, hold fast to the promise, I have a plan and I will be found by you, when you seek me with all your heart'.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Grace be with you!

Stu

#KeepTrusting #KeepConnected #Call4Support

### **Notices:**

#### Upcoming events on Zoom

Thursday: 7:45pm, Unpack the Preach discipleship group discussion. This session will include splitting off into smaller break out rooms for discussion. So, it would be really helpful if you could let **Stu** know directly by email or text/phone call whether you plan to attend.

Saturday: 11am – 2pm: Monthly Prayer Space

Sunday: 10:30am, Sunday Morning Service (we will open the room at 10am for people to gather to chat and leave it open after the service for people to chat as well).

Thursday 21 May: additional Church Member's meeting.

**KBC YouTube channel:** Here you will find Stu's daily devotional series 'You are....' and our sermons each week: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0lqZEJkxDYGSQCw6onJw/featured>